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BUYING BY QUALITY GRADES

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Agriculture

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How can Federal standards for food products be used by the housewife in her daily marketing? Homemakers who are interested in the efficient and economical management of their households have heard of "quality grades". They wonder, naturally, just how these grades are indicated for the consumer and how far they, the housewives, can apply them. Most of us know from sad experience that price is not necessarily an indication of quality, and we would like to have a more certain guide in our daily trips to the food markets.

The subject is not so simple as appears at first. While quality standards have been worked out for a great many kinds of foods by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, these grades or standards were originally established for the producer and shipper rather than the housewife who buys at retail. In most cases, the marks, names, or other indications of grade are expressed so as to guide the wholesalers and people who buy in wholesale quantities, like cafeteria, hotel and institution managers. To the customer in the retail store many of these designations are meaningless; usually they do not even appear on the crate or basket from which the retail purchase is taken.

The housewife is a very busy person with a variety of duties, and relatively little time for the particular duty of purchasing the family food supplies. She has to deal with many kinds of foods and with several qualities of most kinds. To some extent she has learned to associate quality with a brand or trade name, and recently she has become aware of the importance of reading the statements of weight and lawfulness on the labels of packaged and canned goods. Even so she may find herself still in the dark as to the quality of the contents.

Knowing the quality grade does not mean that all the lesser grades will be passed over and only the choicer qualities sold. On the contrary, for many purposes the fancy grades are too expensive and a medium or even low grade will do. For example, one wants table apples partly for decorative effect, so one chooses apples that are large, red, and beautiful to look at as well as good in flavor; but pie apples will be cut up anyway, so a few blemishes do not matter, and a lower grade will prove perfectly satisfactory. Another illustration: The first two of the four quality grades of retail eggs "U.S. Specials" and "U.S. Extras" are desirable for boiling or

poaching; the fourth grade is less attractive and solid as the egg is turned out of the shell, but is still nutritious and palatable in cooked foods and sells at a lower price than the higher grades. The housewife knows what she wants to do with the eggs she buys, and if she can tell which quality grade she is getting, she can buy some for boiling or poaching, and some for cooking and baking.

Official quality grades might be placed in three fairly well defined groups with respect to the consumer's ability to use them. The first group includes those foods which have grade designations easily recognized by the housewife. In this group there is a stamp, a tag, a certificate, or some other indication of grade that can be seen and readily understood. The second group includes foods that are sold by quality grades at wholesale, particularly fruits and vegetables, but not so easily identified by the retail customer. Canned farm products comprise the third group. The labels on the cans must bear truthful statements, but at present they give very little information about the quality grades of the contents.

Beef, turkey during the holiday season, eggs, butter and cheese are in the first group. Canned chicken and chicken products might be roughly included, since those put up by a number of firms now bear a label denoting wholesomeness, if not quality grade, and this is now true of some dressed rabbits.

The meat stamp that indicates a quality grade should not be confused with the Federal meat inspection stamp showing that the carcass has been inspected at the slaughter house for diseased condition. The quality grading service has been developed with the housewife or retail consumer in mind, and will be discussed at length in a later article in this series. A similar service is now being used for lamb and mutton.

Turkeys have been marked by grade during the holiday season for the past five years. A tag or band on the leg is sometimes used. This year government graded turkeys will be shipped to dealers in crates or barrels marked by quality

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of various factors on the growth and development of plants. The study was conducted over a period of six months, during which time the following factors were manipulated: light intensity, water availability, and soil composition. The results of the study are presented in the following sections.

The first section discusses the effects of light intensity on plant growth. It was found that plants grown under high light intensity exhibited significantly higher growth rates than those grown under low light intensity. This is likely due to the fact that light is a primary source of energy for plants, and higher light intensity allows for more efficient photosynthesis.

The second section discusses the effects of water availability on plant growth. It was found that plants grown under high water availability exhibited significantly higher growth rates than those grown under low water availability. This is likely due to the fact that water is a primary component of plant cells, and higher water availability allows for more efficient cell expansion.

The third section discusses the effects of soil composition on plant growth. It was found that plants grown in soil with a high concentration of nutrients exhibited significantly higher growth rates than those grown in soil with a low concentration of nutrients. This is likely due to the fact that nutrients are essential for plant growth, and higher nutrient concentrations allow for more efficient nutrient uptake.

The results of this study have important implications for the field of plant biology. They suggest that light intensity, water availability, and soil composition are all important factors that can influence plant growth and development. This information can be used to develop more effective strategies for plant cultivation and management.

For example, in the case of light intensity, it may be possible to develop more efficient lighting systems for indoor plant cultivation. In the case of water availability, it may be possible to develop more efficient irrigation systems. In the case of soil composition, it may be possible to develop more effective fertilization strategies.

Overall, the results of this study provide a valuable contribution to our understanding of plant biology and the factors that influence plant growth and development.

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designations, but the individual buyer will have to take the dealer's word for what she is getting. If enough housewives ask in advance for government graded turkeys, dealers will be more inclined to carry them, past experience has shown.

Other ways of indicating the grades of eggs, butter, and cheese are used.

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics has worked out standards for practically all fruits and vegetables and each year a larger quantity is sold under these grades. Information as to exactly what they are will be supplied upon application to the bureau. At present the majority of retail customers are not familiar with the grades and do not ask for the commodity by grade name. The more they acquaint themselves with these names and ask for them, the more the service will be extended to benefit them. Dealers will stock with goods of the grade desired, and possibly make more effort to retain the identifying marks on containers to show their customers.

In the third group of products -- the canned goods -- the housekeeper has an indirect way of finding out what grades she is getting. The bureau suggests that if she is a large buyer she might buy and compare several cans of the same article put up under different brand names and satisfy herself as to which brand gives her the quality she is interested in at the price she wishes to pay. She could score each brand on a basis of the quality factors enumerated in the standards referred to in the preceding paragraph. Those who buy chiefly from wholesalers can specify in their contracts of purchase that the commodity shall be of a certain grade according to U.S. Standards. Just recently one or two canning plants have begun marking their can with U.S. Grade names under the direct supervision of government graders. Lima beans are now being so canned and marked and other commodities may follow.

To sum up: Quality grades can be used by the individual housewife in buying some foods, but there is need for a further demand if the grading service is to be extended. As the Bureau of Agricultural Economics sees it, the development of grades on which the individual consumer can buy is a very important element in future standardization work. When there are enough housewives thinking in terms of what quality they can get for their money, price and quality will be better adjusted.

